

The Implementation of one of the History Education Decisions in the Second National Education Council in 1943: The Formation Story of a Histomap

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Abstract

This article discusses the meeting of the Second National Educational Council in 1943, the decisions made about teaching history and the preparation and implementation of histomaps, which was one of the decisions made about the teaching of history. For this purpose, document analyses are used and first hand and second hand resources were reviewed. The endeavor in this study is to show how one of the council decisions of the first years of the Republic is applied. Hasan Âli Yücel, the Minister of National Education assigned Hâmit Zübeyr Koşay for this histomap task. Benefiting from the study of John B. Sparks (1931) named “The Histomap: Four Thousand Years of World History” and working with a team, Hâmit Zübeyr Koşay developed a histomap compatible to Turkish History in 3 years. This case study is significant as it described the obligation of bureaucrats of the Ministry of National Education in the early 20s of the Republic. The histomap of Sparks by Rand McNally Publishing in the USA has been continuously updated since it was first developed. Unfortunately, since then the mechanisms were not constructed to update histomap of Koşay regarding the changing history course books and programs in Turkey.

Key Words

National Education Council, History Education, Hasan Âli Yücel, Hâmit Zübeyr Koşay, Histomap.

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This article discusses the meeting of the Second National Educational Council in 1943, the decisions made about teaching history and preparation and the implementation of histomaps which was one of the decisions on the teaching of history. From this point of view, the implementation of decisions of the National Education Council will be discussed. As you know, Atatürk held the Maarif (old use of “education” in Turkish) Congress and 200 teachers were participated in it on July 15th, 1921 when it was the climax of Independence War. After 1923, 1st, 2nd and 3rd Scholarship Boards were held in Ankara. These meetings are also important as they show the democratic attitude of the administration group of the Turkish Republic about educational processes. The First National Educational Council was held on July 17th, 1939 with the efforts of Hasan Âli Yücel, the Minister of National Education. By holding the 2nd National Education Council, Hasan Âli Yücel served significantly in institutionalizing these meetings (Ergin, 1977; Ayas, 1948).

The Decisions of the Second National Education Council on History Education

While World War II was continuing severely, the Second National Education Council was held at the Faculty of Language, History and Geography in Ankara on the 15th of February in 1943 (Tan, 16 Şubat 1943; Vatan, 16 Şubat 1943, p.1-2; Akşam, 16 Şubat 1943). As the subject of the article is decisions made in history education commission, the studies of ethics education and mother tongue commissions will not be discussed in this study. However, the Turkish journalists such as A. E. Yalman (1943) wrote the agenda of the National Council to his column. On February 21st in 1943, President İsmet İnönü invited the members of councils to the Çankaya residence (Tan, 22 Şubat 1943).

The Second National Education Council and its decisions are of vital importance in terms of history education because no such technical, pedagogical, and detailed study had ever been made on history education in any of the preceding National Education Councils. History education commission presented a report on school history books, teacher and teaching issue, additional information, tools necessary for history education, and requirements for it (MV, 1943, p. 199). At this juncture, this council accepted that different history

textbooks for vocational schools should be written. At that time, history teachers working at vocational schools were demanding different history textbooks for these schools (Uçar, 2008, pp. 73-74).

In the report presented by the history education commission to the Council Secretariat, it was suggested that synchronic tables on histomap systems should be prepared by the Ministry of Education as a teaching aid for history education in order to prevent students from memorizing historical facts. In addition, it was stated that there was a need for timetables to demonstrate significant events in world history and cultural movements in comparison (MV, 1943, pp. 203-204). Actually, one of the people emphasizing the importance of synchronic history tables in history education in 1835 was German pedagogue J. F. Herbart (1908, p. 230). English philosopher A. N. Whitehead also emphasized the importance of demonstrating history using graphics by saying “history contour lines are more lively and informative than empty catalogues of names and dates composing the main part of school education.” (Koşay, 1946, p. 1).

How was the Histomap prepared?

With the decision taken in the National Education Council, the study with the title (Comparative Timetable of Prehistoric and Historic Ages (Histomap)” was published in 1946 as a result of a 3-year study with lead by Hâmit Zübeyr Koşay, the General Director of Ancient Arts and Museums of the Ministry of National Education. Hâmit Zübeyr Koşay stated in the preface of the histomap that the Minister of National Education, Hasan Âli Yücel, who pursued the goal of simplification of history education, assigned him to prepare a timetable for world history by considering special conditions of our country and by benefiting from current examples (Koşay, 1946, p. 1). Koşay stated that he had adapted it from a histomap published in Chicago. However, he did not give any information about the identity of the current example (Koşay, 1946, p. 1). With the research conducted on the web site of American Congress Library, it was concluded that the work of John B. Sparks (1931) named “The Histomap: Four Thousand Years of World History” was taken as an example. The histomap of John B. Sparks (1952; 1990) was republished with the name “Rand McNally, Histomap of World History (Cosmopolitan Map)” and was offered to be used by teachers and students.

While the Histomap of Sparks begins from B.C. 2000, the Histomap of Koşay begins from B.C. 4000. In addition to this, Koşay divided history of humanity to periods of 50 years as Sparks did. Translation from English to Turkish was made by the archaeologist Sabahat Göğüş and new information added by the archaeologist Cahit Kına. The designer of the Turkish History Institution, Ömer Üçüncü, also participated in re-modification and publication works were made by the Broadcast Director, Adnan Ötüken and his friends (Koşay, 1946, p.1).

Ord. Prof. Landsberger and his assistant Kemal Balkan from Ankara University Faculty of Language, History and Geography updated the information about Sumerians, Assyrians, Elam and Hittites in the Histomap, because some corrections should have been made in the Histomap on Sparks concerning the History of Middle East in terms of new research and excavations (Koşay, 1946, p.1).

The Length of the Histomap of Koşay is 270 cm and its width is 39 cm. It is composed of events from B.C. 4000 to A.D. 1939. The table is divided into 50-year columns. The table consists of 9 rows, top to bottom including historical events in China, Middle Asia, Indian, Iran, Sumerian, Assyrian (Syria-Palestine), Anatolia, Egypt, and Aegean.

In this Histomap, it is possible to see the rise and fall of civilizations. It gives the opportunity to see clearly the position of a historical event in world history. For instance, the question “what was happening in the world during the journey of Marco Polo to China?” can be easily answered by means of the Histomap.

Still the question remains: Why does not Histomap become widespread in our schools, especially in high schools? It might be because of the fact that history was not updated when high school history programs and course books were changed. While Rand McNally Publishing updated the Histomap of Sparks, unfortunately the mechanisms were not constructed to update the Histomap of Koşay in Turkey. Besides, history teachers are not educated on how to teach a lesson by using Histomaps. Another opinion on this issue is that high school history teachers might find Histomap beyond the knowledge level of their students.

Discussion and Conclusion

The 1943 National Education Council and its decisions can be accepted as a turning point for history education in Turkey. No such technical, pedagogical, and detailed study had been made about history education in any of the the preceding National Education Councils. The endeavor in this study is to show how seriously one of the council decisions of the first years of the Republic, in other words the decision about Histomap, is applied. Histomap is the achievement of two hardworking people, Hasan Âli Yücel and Hâmit Zübeyr Koşay. The preparation of a revised publication of this Histomap is an indication of cooperation between the Turkish History Institution and the Ministry of National Education. It seems that this implementation sets a good example for the application of decisions taken in the future National Education Councils.

According to Kaya (1993, p. 46), the educational system of Turkey in the 1980's was behind the principles established by the Scholarship Boards in 1926. Hesapçıoğlu (2006, p. 110) mentioned the National Education Council as an institution responsible for educational planning and its decisions as documents for educational planning.

In the 15th National Education Council on May 13-17th in 1996, it was decided that “decisions taken in previous councils are to be followed and evaluated.” Applying the decisions of first priority depends on the order of the Minister. For the first time, a booklet was prepared during the 16th National Education Council to assess the decisions of the 15th National Education Council (MEB, 1999, p. 2). Today, following the council decisions are an important agenda of the National Education Organization. According to the National Education Council regulation amended in 1998 (Article 19), it was reiterated that which decisions are executed will become definite with the approval of the Minister. It is stated that the council decisions should take place in the Ministry and fulfill plans according to their priority and importance. Doing necessary pursuance and coordination in applying the council decisions is among the duty of the General Secretariat of the Head Council of Education and Morality (MEB, 1998, p. 14).

Yavuz (2004, pp. 28-29) tried to put forth “responsibility percepti-

on level” and “historical position” of the National Education Councils, Council of Education and Morality and the Ministry of National Education in the past in an objective way in his study about collective assessment of National Education Councils. In this framework, he pointed out the discussion of information, document and project background in a comparative way by using an integrated system approach. In a similar manner, it can be concluded from this study that in the past the Council decisions about a specific subject like preparation of histomap were applied in a serious manner.

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